RELEVANCE OF MAX WEBER'S ADMINISTRATIVE IDEAS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO STATE SECRETARIAT OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

A SYNOPSIS

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INTRODUCTION

Kurt Lewin famously proclaimed, *"There is nothing so practical as good theory" signifying that a good theory lends itself to being applied in a variety of contexts.*

Max Weber's influence upon the study of organizations has been profound, perhaps unrivaled. But his contemporary relevance is less certain. The proposed research celebrates the achievements of Weber and, at the same time, reflects on his current influence.

Weber was born on 21 April 1864. His university education and career, by today's standards, were unusual. He began his university studies as a student of law in Heidelberg but his education was broad in scope, embracing history, economics and philosophy. He also showed a facility with languages, learning Italian and Spanish in order to examine original materials for his doctoral thesis on the history of trading companies during the Middle Ages, completed in 1889. Later, Weber would learn Russian in order to follow events during the Russian Revolution. However, he was no intellectual ascetic. As a student, he engaged fully in university life and after only three semesters had become 'a massive, beer-drinking, duel-marked, cigar-puffing' student (Gerth and Mills 1970: 29).

Weber qualified as a university teacher with a second doctoral thesis, submitted in 1891, on the significance of Roman agrarian history for public and private law, and began his university career teaching law in Berlin, with a teaching load of 19 hours a week. In 1894, he took up a chair in political economy at Freiburg University but soon moved to Heidelberg as a professor of economics.

In 1898, soon after the death of his father, Weber became ill, beginning a cycle of 'neurotic collapse, travel and work' (Gerth and Mills 1970: 12) that lasted for the rest of his life. His illness prompted the university to grant him leave with pay. Weber then spent several weeks in a mental institution before convalescing while traveling in England, Scotland, Belgium and Italy. He returned to Heidelberg in 1902 but was unable to fully resume his responsibilities. His only published output in almost five years was a book review, but in 1904 he began publishing essays on a range of topics, including the first section of *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*, in which he associated the origins of capitalism with the religious values of Calvinism, The completed version, published in 1905, became 'probably the most important sociological work of the twentieth century' (Bell, cited in Baehr and Wells 2002: xxxi) and contains the famous metaphor of the 'iron cage'.

Weber was much affected by a visit to the United States where he was struck by its 'capitalist spirit' and industrial practices, especially the scale and human consequences of large bureaucratic administrative organizations. Returning to Germany, Weber launched himself into an outpouring of essays and was intensely active in the development of sociology as a discipline, even though he was, officially, still on sick leave. It is unlikely that today's frenetic 'publish or perish' tenure system would have allowed Weber the same opportunity. As Macrae, somewhat disarmingly, comments: 'The strength of the German academic system that could allow Weber his prolonged leave, his "titular" chair, his ambiguity of field — he can be thought of as lawyer, historian, economist, philosopher, political scientist, as well as sociologist — is today nowhere to be found' (MacRae 1974: 34).

Weber was 50 at the outbreak of World War I and for a year was in charge of running nine hospitals around Heidelberg, gaining direct experience of the supervision of a bureaucracy. At the end of the war, he moved to the University of Vienna to a specially created chair of sociology and gave his first university

lectures in 19 years. He died of pneumonia, aged 56, at about 5 o'clock on 14 June 1920.

Weber's influence on sociology and organization studies outside Germany was delayed *The Protestant ethic* was not available in translation until 10 years later (Weber 1930). Further, Weber's essays on bureaucracy became widely known only following appearance of the Gerth and Mills (1946) volume. Despite the delay, Weber's formative influence on organization studies and organization theory during the decades after World War II was immense. His writings on power, authority, bureaucracy, capitalism and methodology shaped much early organizational research. Weber's articulation of 'bureaucracy' stimulated key streams of research into the functioning and dysfunctions of bureaucracies. His notion of formal organization as an 'iron cage' and the concomitant ascendance of instrumental reason were key themes of his work. Several scholars queried whether there was in fact a single form of bureaucracy, a movement that developed into structural contingency theory and configurational theory, which is one of the major perspectives within organization studies. It could be argued that Weber's insistence on the role of societal values in determining organizational forms in society foreshadowed some of the themes within institutional theory. The central theme of legitimacy figures in several organizational perspectives, including institutional theory and population ecology. Weber also connects to those who point to the role of large, complex organizations as significant agents within society, affecting the distribution of power and the allocation of privileges and advantage.

Today, Weber's status in organization studies is more complicated. While some scholars continue to draw on his work, developing research and theory that extends and refines his ideas, many of those ideas have ossified within the larger community of organizational scholars. The relevance of Weber in today's different circumstances is unclear. For example his influence on the sociology of organizations began when contexts were less dynamic and the pace of change was, arguably, less punishing. The study of organizational change, one of today's

major research themes, appeared less central in the middle decades of the 20th century. Today, new forms of technology are enabling new forms of organizations, such as inter-organizational networks that, from one perspective, appear antithetical to the large, complex structures at the heart of Weber's analysis. Knowledge-based work, an important feature of today's network society, threatens the authority of the 'office' and creates tensions between hierarchical and knowledge-based organizational structures. The split between facts and values that has long been a characteristic of bureaucratic organization raises important questions regarding its sustainability, in the aftermath of corporate scandals and unethical organizational action. The relationship between instrumental rationality and value-based rationality, to which Weber was one of the first to draw our attention, may need to be rethought.

The proposed research is thus intended to both celebrate Weber's contributions and encourage a re-examination of them in the light of theoretical traditions and social conditions that are markedly different from those in Weber's time. It is this apparent disjuncture between the circumstances that provoked Weber's work in the early decades of the 20th century and which resonated with and deeply influenced scholars later that century, and the economic, social and technological circumstances that prevail today, that provides the motivation for this proposed research. Although the 148th anniversary of Weber's birth is the occasion for the proposed research, from a substantive point of view researcher wish to reconsider the Weberian legacy because our circumstances today are so vastly different from the time in which he was writing. *How does Weberian analysis help us today to understand organizations and organized societies in general? Does Weber still have relevance in what might be termed the 'digital' or information age?*

OBJECTIVES

The aim and objectives of the present study are the following :-

1. To analyse the ideas of the Max Weber about administrative authority in order to find out as to whether the application of ideas of Max Weber hold good even today in Indian bureaucracy.
2. To evaluate the ideas of Max Weber about rationality.
3. To analyse the ideas of Max Weber about legitimization of Administrative action.
4. To examine the ideas of Max Weber on "ideal type" as tool of analysis of bureaucratic organization for the improvement their efficiency in public administration.

HYPOTHESIS

"The philosophy of bureaucracy of Max Weber has considerably influenced the emergence of strong and well entrenched authority in Indian Bureaucracy."

SUB-HYPOTHESIS

1. The ideas of Max Weber about administrative authority have been subjected to critical evaluation and hence don't hold good in the 21st century's Indian bureaucracy.
2. The ideas of Weber about rationalization considerably influenced the changing concept of modern bureaucracy and its authority.
3. Weber's concept of legitimacy has considerably changed the acceptance of rules and policies of the administrators by the citizens in Modern Societies.
4. The 'Ideal Type' as a tool of analysis of bureaucratic organization for improving its efficiency in public administration is still valid today even

under the changing socio-techno-economic environment of post-industrial societies.

REVIEW OF LITERATURES

1. *"From Max Weber : Essays in Sociology",* H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (ed.) Oxford University Press, 1946.

   In this book Gerth and Mills described the ideas of Max Weber on the ideal type of bureaucracy, presuppositions and cause of bureaucracy, power, religion, socio-political ideas of Max Weber and rationalization etc. which is more fruitful for the proposed study. This book is exclusively devoted to the ideas of Max Weber.

2. *"The Study of Social and Economic Organization,"* Talcott Parsons (ed.), Oxford University Press, New York, 1947.

   This book present a general overview of the ideas of Max Weber on the analysis of legitimacy, rational structure, acceptance of validity, authority and bureaucracy. This book is more appropriate for the documentary proof for the analysis of administrative ideas of Max Weber.

3. *"The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism"* by Max Weber, George Allen & Unevin Ltd., London 1976.

   This book an accumulation of the ideas of Max Weber on ethic as well as on the ideas on the Charisma, rationalization bureaucratic structure and ideal type construct. This book is divided into five chapters. This is also helpful for the present study.

4. *"The Political Thought of Max Weber – In Quest of Statesmanship",* Ilse Dronberger Merseredith Corporation, New York, 1971.

   This book attempts to understand and analyse the political ideas of Max Weber, to isolate and discus the principal motives which can be discerned, and to explore certain German Social, Economic and political trends between 1885 and 1920 which sustained these motives. This book

is divided into twelve chapters. The first chapter deal with Max Weber's biography and last chapter is most important because of it focuses on the ideas of Max Weber and the present.

5. *"Social Theory and Social Structure"* Robert K. Merton (ed.), Amerind Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1981.

   The present book is divided into four parts including twenty one chapters. In many chapters of this book find many aspects as suggested by Max Weber like focus on authority, ideas on bureaucracy and power in bureaucracy etc.

6. Lounsbury and Carberry argue that Weber influenced three major streams of organizational research : The study of organization in relation to its societal context, which directly and indirectly draws on Weber's comparative historical approach to understanding the rise of different forms of organizing; the study of intra-organizational arrangements, which drew particularly on Weber's notion of bureaucracy as an ideal-type organizational form and his analysis of forms of authority; and the study of the environment-organization relationship, which taps into Weber's analysis of the efficiency of bureaucratic organizations as well as his cultural analyses. Lounsbury and Carberry argue that Weber's concepts and methods be re-injected into organization studies as a means of understanding the post-industrial organization, social movements and economic sociology more broadly.

7. Stewart Clegg's essay, *'Puritans, Visionaries and Survivors'*, focusses on Weber as a cultural analyst and the implications of that analysis for the world of organizations and commerce. In a creative integration of ideas and contexts, Clegg traces a path from Weber's notion of rationality and the values that underpinned it, to the roles of values and rationality in contemporary organizations and markets. But he does not suggest that understanding contemporary organizations and their role in society can rely on unaltered Weberian ideas rooted in the 19th century.

8. In *'A Neo-Weberian Theory of the Firm',* Pursey Heugens draws on Weberian concepts to provide the foundation for an integrative theory of the firm. In this provocative article, Heugens argues that the field of organization studies is divided into two complementary sets of theories: those that attempt to explain why firms exist (e.g. transaction cost economics and agency theory), and those that attempts to explain how firms connect the actions of individual actors to collective outcomes. (e.g. behavioral, knowledge-based and evolutionary theories of the firm). In this article, Heugens uses Weber's theory of bureaucracy, and particularly his notion of rational-legal decision rules, to develop a theory of the firm that addresses both why firms exist and how they operate. Thus, Heugens expresses a utilitarian attitude to Weber's work, not only arguing for its contemporary relevance but demonstrating its practical application for the development of theory.

9. Eric J. Walton's contribution also focusses on Weber's theory of bureaucracy, but does so through an empirical investigation of its general validity. Through a meta-analysis of almost four decades of empirical research, Walton estimates the statistical relationships among key elements of bureaucracy, finding strong support for a model of bureaucratic control. Walton's work synthesizes and extends one of the major traditions in organization studies that has been a direct descendant of Weber's writing — structural contingency theory. Contingency theory perhaps more than any other tradition in organization studies, is directly tied Weber's conception of bureaucracy, taking from it not only a concern for the form as a whole, but also for its specific, constitutive elements: a fixed division of labour (horizontal differentiation), a hierarchy of authority-based positions (vertical differentiation), written documents and general rules (standardization and formalization) and the use of expert personnel (specialization). Walton investigates the relationships among these elements of bureaucracy both on a cross-sectional basis and over time. This contribution is important not only because it provides a convincing

empirical basis for understanding the robustness of these relationships, but also because it suggests that even the dynamics of 'post-bureaucratic' forms of organizing can be understood more clearly by attending to their relationship with bureaucratic forms of control. Walton demonstrates the value of retaining key elements of Weber's theory of bureaucracy as central to contemporary organization studies.

DEFINITION OF BUREAUCRACY

Weber defines bureaucracy as, *'A hierarchical organization designed rationally to coordinate the work of many individuals in the pursuit of large-scale administrative tasks and organizational goals.'*

METHODOLOGY

This research started with a collection of secondary data from various literature for the purpose of conducting a literature review.

However, due to nature of this study, obtaining primary data is critical for the success of this research.

The questionnaire and schedule will be designed for obtaining primary data. And a combination of qualitative as well as quantitative approach has been taken due care for better insight. An empirical research method is adopted to test the relevance of administrative ideas of Max Weber in Indian bureaucratic scenario.

TENTATIVE CHAPTERIZATION

This research is divided into six chapters to maintain a clear focus and discussion on the research aims and research questions:

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE OF HIMACHAL PRADESH STATE SECRETARIAT AND ITS HIERARCHY

CHAPTER 3: MAX WEBER'S IDEA OF "IDEAL TYPE" AND ITS RELEVANCE IN HIMACHAL PRADESH STATE SECREATARIAT

CHAPTER 4: MAX WEBER'S IDEA OF RATIONALITY AND ITS RELEVANCE IN HIMACHAL PRADESH STATE SECREATARIAT

CHAPTER 5: MAX WEBER'S IDEA OF LEGITIMIZATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION AND ITS RELEVANCE IN HIMACHAL PRADESH STATE SECREATARIAT

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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